

Mineral Industry Surveys

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BISMUTH IN THE FIRST QUARTER 2002

Total bismuth consumption in the United States was 546 metric tons during the first quarter of 2002, a decrease of less than 1% compared with the fourth quarter of 2001.

Compared with the previous quarter, consumption of bismuth in the first quarter increased 1% for chemical and pharmaceutical uses, decreased 1% for alloying uses, and decreased 1% for uses as a metallurgical additive. Total consumption in the first quarter decreased 2% when compared to that of the first quarter of 2000.

The New York dealer price for bismuth as published in Platts Metals Week began the quarter at \$3.43 per pound. The price declined steadily to \$3.20 at the end of February and remained constant for the rest of the quarter.

Chinese prices reached a low of \$2.70 per pound during the quarter, but steady demand and the lack of bismuth production from the Guangzhou tin and bismuth smelter owing to bankruptcy of the operator kept prices from falling farther. Bismuth prices remained above \$3.00 per pound outside China (Mining Journal, 2002c).

Early in February, the Bismuth Institute, headquartered in Brussels, Belgium, discontinued all operations and ceased to exist. For nearly 30 years, the Institute provided bismuth statistics and encouraged research and development as well as new uses for the metal. The Institute also was instrumental in

sustaining confidence in the health benefits of bismuth throughout a crisis in France during the mid-1970s when bismuth compounds in individual doses were used excessively as self medication. In addition, the Institute helped open trade with China, now the world leader in bismuth reserves and production. Moreover, the Institute consistently promoted the environmental advantages offered by bismuth as a substitute for lead in various applications (Mining Journal, 2002b).

Update:

The New York dealer price for bismuth held steady at \$3.20 per pound through the month of April. This stability, after a year of falling prices, made producers optimistic, but significant price increases seemed unlikely in 2002 (Mining Journal, 2002a).

References Cited

- Mining Journal, 2002a, Minor metals in April: Mining Journal, v. 338, no. 8683, May 3, p. 325.
Mining Journal, 2002b, Minor metals in February: Mining Journal, v. 338, no. 8674, March 1, p. 169.
Mining Journal, 2002c, Minor metals in March: Mining Journal, v. 338, no. 8678, March 29, p. 237.

TABLE 1
SALIENT BISMUTH STATISTICS 1/

(Kilograms, unless otherwise specified)

	2001 p/	2002 First quarter
Consumption	2,200,000	546,000
Exports 2/	541,000	NA
Imports for consumption	2,220,000	NA
Price per pound, dealer, end of period	\$3.43	\$3.20
Stocks, end of period, consumer	95,200	88,800

p/ Preliminary. NA Not available.

1/ Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits.

2/ Comprises bismuth metal and the bismuth content of alloys and waste and scrap.

TABLE 2
BISMUTH METAL CONSUMED IN THE UNITED STATES, BY USE 1/

(Metric tons)

Use	2001 p/	2002 First quarter
Chemicals 2/	805,000	199,000
Bismuth alloys	981,000	241,000
Metallurgical additives	369,000	94,800
Other	45,000	11,000
Total	2,200,000	546,000

p/ Preliminary.

1/ Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits, may not add to totals shown.

2/ Includes industrial and laboratory chemicals, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals.

TABLE 3
U.S. EXPORTS OF BISMUTH METAL, ALLOYS, AND WASTE AND SCRAP,
BY COUNTRY 1/

(Kilograms, metal content)

Country	2001 p/			2002 2/	
	Year	December	Fourth quarter	January	February
Australia	306	--	306	--	--
Belgium	194,000	--	22,500	--	--
Canada	89,700	4,360	12,600	544	12,500
China	11,100	--	11,100	--	--
Dominican Republic	2,380	--	--	157	--
Germany	90,300	--	--	--	6
Hong Kong	101	--	29	--	54
Israel	1,000	1,000	1,000	--	--
Japan	--	--	--	66	--
Mexico	91,100	2,000	22,800	5,000	6,750
Netherlands	36,600	--	--	433	--
Peru	872	--	--	--	--
Philippines	2,070	--	--	--	--
Russia	4,760	512	512	--	--
Singapore	260	--	--	--	150
United Kingdom	12,600	--	8,500	--	--
Venezuela	4,250	--	--	--	--
Total	541,000	7,870	79,300	6,200	19,500

p/ Preliminary. -- Zero.

1/ Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

2/ March data were not available at the time of publication.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 4
U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF BISMUTH METAL, BY COUNTRY 1/

(Kilograms)

Country	2001p/			2002 2/	
	Year	December	Fourth quarter	January	February
Belgium	728,000	38,600	84,200	26,500	62,200
Canada	42,500	771	12,400	1,000	2,000
China	501,000	38,200	90,300	38,900	5,730
Denmark	52	--	--	--	--
France	2,820	--	1,770	--	--
Germany	57,800	--	--	76	66
Hong Kong	--	--	--	9,770	10,000
Italy	506	--	--	--	--
Japan	6,950	--	121	650	694
Mexico	605,000	78,300	157,000	--	78,900
Netherlands	1,160	--	--	--	--
Spain	34,000	15,000	28,600	--	--
United Kingdom	241,000	--	33,700	13,700	--
Total	2,220,000	171,000	408,000	90,600	160,000

p/ Preliminary. -- Zero.

1/ Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

2/ March data were not available at the time of publication.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.